



Department of Commerce

Energy News Overview

Local Energy News

As a result of a recent ruling by a federal judge, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bonneville Power Administration are once again discussing the removal of four large hydroelectric dams on the lower Snake River. The dams allow barge traffic to Lewiston, Idaho and help with flood control. Just before Thanksgiving, about 300 people congregated in Pasco, Washington with representatives of these three agencies to discuss the possibility and consequences of removing the dams. Additional meetings are to be held through mid-January.

Puget Sound Energy is getting closer to initiating construction of its LNG plant in the Tacoma tide flats. PSE has completed all state and federal permitting and has acquired some permits from the City of Tacoma. Most of the LNG will be sold to customers including the shipping company Totem Ocean Trailer Exchange, while PSE plans to use the storage tank's contents as a backup supply for high-demand gas days.

National Energy News

Microsoft announced a contract to acquire additional wind energy for its facilities and server farms – the company currently contracts 500 MW of wind capacity. Recently, Amazon announced plans to invest in a 189 MW wind farm in Ohio. Many tech companies such as Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Google are acquiring large amounts of renewable energy to reduce their carbon emissions and for public relations purposes.

President-elect Trump continued to stick to his promise of being a change agent by nominating current ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson for Secretary of State (Sorry Mitt) and Former Texas Governor Rick Perry for the Department of Energy. Ironically, Energy is the department that Rick wanted to eliminate but whose name he couldn't recall during a 2012 Presidential debate - oops. While the Perry nomination is sadly amusing, the Tillerson nomination maybe challenged in the Senate. Tillerson, an ExxonMobil lifer, has no direct diplomatic experience, and the company, which in the past had financially supported climate change deniers, has close ties with Russia and Vladimir Putin.

Despite President-elect Trump's threat to withdraw the US from the Paris Climate agreement, Canada is moving forward with efforts to reduce carbon emissions. The country approved a deal that over the next several years will require the provinces to put a carbon tax or a cap on emissions. Canada also announced its intent to phase out coal power plants by 2030. Contradicting these positive efforts, the country approved two pipeline expansion projects that would move additional oil sands petroleum to the US and to BC for eventual export.

Climate News

Despite some good news over the last several years regarding global carbon dioxide emissions, climate scientists report that emissions of methane, the second most important greenhouse gas, have increased over the last few years. The primary cause of the methane spike is thought to be agriculture in the developing world, while increased leakage of methane from energy production is a likely secondary contributor. Higher temperatures in the arctic and subarctic regions also contribute by speeding up the decomposition of organic matter that until recently was frozen most of the year.